

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows. This listing of the claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1-7 (Canceled)

8. (Currently amended) A bellows-type collar for washing machines comprising a machine housing, a lye container that is arranged therein, a cantilevered drum which is rotatably disposed in the lye container, and a frontal loading opening, wherein the bellows-type collar comprises an inner, a central and an outer collar ring and is sealingly fixed to both the machine housing and the lye container in the area of the loading opening, and the inner collar ring is visible through a closure of the loading opening, wherein an annular stiffening element comprising a thickened area of the bellows-type collar is assigned to the visible inner collar ring, which stiffening element reduces any spreading of deformation forces from the central and outer collar ring on to the inner collar ring, and
a non-visible section of the bellows-type collar, wherein an articulated section is disposed in the non-visible section which promotes deformation of the bellows-type collar in said non-visible section.
9. (Previously Presented) The bellows-type collar according to claim 8, wherein a flexible metal ring is vulcanized at least one of on and in the bellows-type collar.
10. (Previously Presented) The bellows-type collar according to claim 8, wherein the stiffening element is disposed in the area of the inner collar ring which lies closest to the drum neck of the drum.
11. (Canceled)

12. (Currently amended) The bellows-type collar according to claim 8 [[11]], wherein the articulated section is formed by a thinner-material area between two thickened areas of the bellows-type collar.

13. (Currently amended) The bellows-type collar according to claim 8 [[11]], wherein the articulated section in the non-visible section of the bellows-type collar directly adjoins the stiffening element.

14. (Currently amended) A washing machine comprising:

 a housing;
 a lye container supported within the housing;
 a cantilevered drum disposed within the lye container and mounted for rotation with respect to the lye container; and
 a frontal loading opening in the housing providing access to the drum; and
 a bellows-type collar at least partially surrounding the frontal loading opening, the bellows-type collar comprising:

 an inner collar ring including an inner fixed edge coupled to the housing and extending inwardly toward the drum to an inner free edge;

 an outer collar ring disposed radially outwardly from the inner collar ring and including an outer fixed edge sealingly coupled to the lye container and extending outwardly toward the housing to an outer free edge;

 a central collar ring extending between the inner free edge and the outer free edge; and

 an annular stiffening element including an articulated section disposed near the inner free edge and restricting the spread of deformation forces from the central and outer collar ring on to the inner collar ring.

15. (Previously Presented) The washing machine according to claim 14, wherein the annular stiffening element includes a nose with a thickened area disposed at the inner free edge near the intersection of the inner collar ring and the central collar ring, at least a portion of the inner collar ring having a thickness being less than the thickness of the nose.
16. (Previously Presented) The washing machine according to claim 15, wherein the thickened area of the nose extends radially outwardly from the inner collar ring providing the inner collar ring with a radially inwardly facing surface being substantially uniform and uninterrupted.
17. (Currently amended) The washing machine according to claim 15, wherein the annular stiffening element includes a bead disposed on the central collar ring, and wherein the ~~and an~~ articulated section is disposed between the bead and the nose, the thickness of the bead being greater than the thickness of the articulated section.
18. (Previously Presented) The washing machine according to claim 17, wherein the thickness of the nose is greater than the thickness of the articulated section.
19. (Previously Presented) The washing machine according to claim 17, wherein at least a portion of the central collar ring disposed between the bead and the outer free edge includes a thickness being less than the thickness of the bead.
20. (Previously Presented) The washing machine according to claim 17, wherein at least a portion of the central collar ring disposed between the bead and the outer free edge includes a thickness being less than the thickness of the articulated section.
21. (Previously Presented) The washing machine according to claim 14, wherein the inner collar ring and outer collar ring extend in directions substantially parallel to one

another and the central collar ring extends in a direction substantially diagonal with respect to the inner and outer collar rings.

22. (Previously Presented) The washing machine according to claim 14, wherein the bellows-type collar includes a flexible vulcanized metal ring is vulcanized.